

Hiring a Physician Assistant



American Academy of
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS
Connecting PAs. Transforming Care

A Benefit for Physicians, Practices, and Patients

PAs work in concert with physicians, complementing the physician's ability to deliver a comprehensive range of medical and surgical services to diverse patient populations. PAs' rigorous education, versatility, and commitment to individualized treatment help physicians and practices function more efficiently and enhance continuity of health care.

Supervising a PA

The relationship between physicians and PAs is one of mutual trust and reliance. A PA practices medicine within the scope of the supervising physician, taking into account any specific restrictions in state law or institutional policy. All states allow PAs to provide patient services in sites where the supervising physician is not physically present, although the physician must be available by telecommunication. There are a few specific exceptions when PAs and supervising physicians must be in the same practice location; check the state PA practice act for details. Within these guidelines, flexibility marks the physician-PA relationship.

The idea of a physician-PA team and supervision is not that the supervising physician should have

to accompany the PA's every step. In an effective team relationship, the physician trusts that the PA will consult him or her when necessary. Likewise, the PA feels confident that the physician will be available when needed, provide learned advice, and accept the care of patients with problems that are beyond the PA's expertise.

The AMA has established guidelines for physician-PA team practice; a copy of the guidelines can be viewed on the AAPA Web site, www.aapa.org.

Prescribing

The legal authority for PAs to sign prescriptions has existed in some states since the 1970s. In recent years, the number of states recognizing the value of PA prescribing has greatly expanded. All states, the District of Columbia, and Guam permit physicians to delegate their prescriptive authority to PAs. When PAs have delegated prescriptive authority, it means that at a minimum, they can sign prescriptions for legend drugs without obtaining a physician co-signature. Nearly all of those states authorize PA prescribing of controlled substances. PAs who prescribe controlled substances must obtain their own federal Drug

Easing Physician Workloads

PAs improve patient flow by freeing up physicians to manage more complex or demanding cases. An American Medical Association (AMA) survey found that PAs enhance practice efficiency, and solo practice physicians who employ PAs experience expanded practice, greater efficiency, and greater access to care for their patients.

PA Cost-effectiveness

According to the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA), PAs generate revenues greater than what their compensation costs employers. Their recent report shows that for every dollar of charges a PA generates for the practice, the employer pays, on average, 30 cents to employ the PA.

Boosting Patient Satisfaction

Hiring a PA enhances patient satisfaction in several respects. Studies by the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research report high patient satisfaction levels for services provided by PAs, ranging between 89 and 96 percent. Aspects of patient satisfaction examined included interpersonal care, confidence in provider, and understanding of patient problems. With a PA on staff, patient waiting times are decreased, improving patient satisfaction through increased access to health care.

Enforcement Administration (DEA) registration numbers.

Third-party Coverage

PAs offer great financial benefits to their employers by providing high-quality medical care for which most public and private third-party payers reimburse. Medicare and TRICARE (formerly known as CHAMPUS) reimburse the physician assistant's employer for services provided by PAs in virtually all practice settings, as well as for assisting at surgery. State Medicaid programs and most private insurers also cover services provided by PAs. Knowing the rules and regulations for PA billing is important to ensure that a practice or institution maximizes legitimate reimbursement. A solid understanding of the rules and regulations is also important for avoiding any allegations of fraud or abuse.

Visit the AAPA Web site's [reimbursement page](#) for more information.

Malpractice

Will adding a PA to a practice reduce or increase the malpractice risk for a supervising physician, practice, or institution? According to information from the National Practitioner Data Bank, maintained by the Division of Quality Assurance of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, PAs incur a remarkably low rate of malpractice liability.

How to Hire a PA

AAPA provides several opportunities to help you find the right PA for your practice.

- Two official AAPA publications with employment advertisements circulate to practicing graduate and student PAs —
- *PA Professional*, a monthly publication containing news articles on issues of concern to PAs, and the
- *Journal of the American Academy of Physician Assistants* (JAAPA), a monthly clinical journal. To place an advertisement or to obtain price quotes, call 800-983-7737.
- The AAPA Web site also hosts [PA Job Link](#), an interactive program

where PAs can post their resumes and potential employers can list their job openings and view the resumes.

- Other good employment resources are AAPA's constituent organizations, including state chapters, specialty organizations, and caucuses. For a list of constituent organizations and contact information, go to AAPA's Web site, www.aapa.org/partners.
- According to the AAPA's Data Services and Statistics Division, more than one-third of all PAs reported that they met their first clinical employer through clinical rotations while attending a PA program. For more information on how to become a preceptor or learn whether a program provides placement services for graduates, contact an accredited PA educational program in your area.

A list of PA programs is available from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant ([ARC-PA](#)) or the Physician Assistant Education Association ([PAEA](#)).